

Midpoint



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⌚ 9 min read

By The Numbers: Great Years In Cinema

It's time once again for our weekly bit of fun here at Midpoint: *By The Numbers*.

Following last week's article about [the cost of different fast food items in America around the time of notable events in American history](#), this week we're talking about the sensational entertainment of the silver screen: Movies.

If you've been around the internet and looked for a movie once or twice, you've probably stumbled upon [the Internet Movie Database](#)—or IMDB as it's almost solely referred to. Even if you haven't, it's just as possible you've seen their rating system while looking at movies or TV shows on Amazon (which [acquired IMDB way back in 1998](#)). It may not be the only movie database out there, but it's definitely the oldest and arguably the largest.

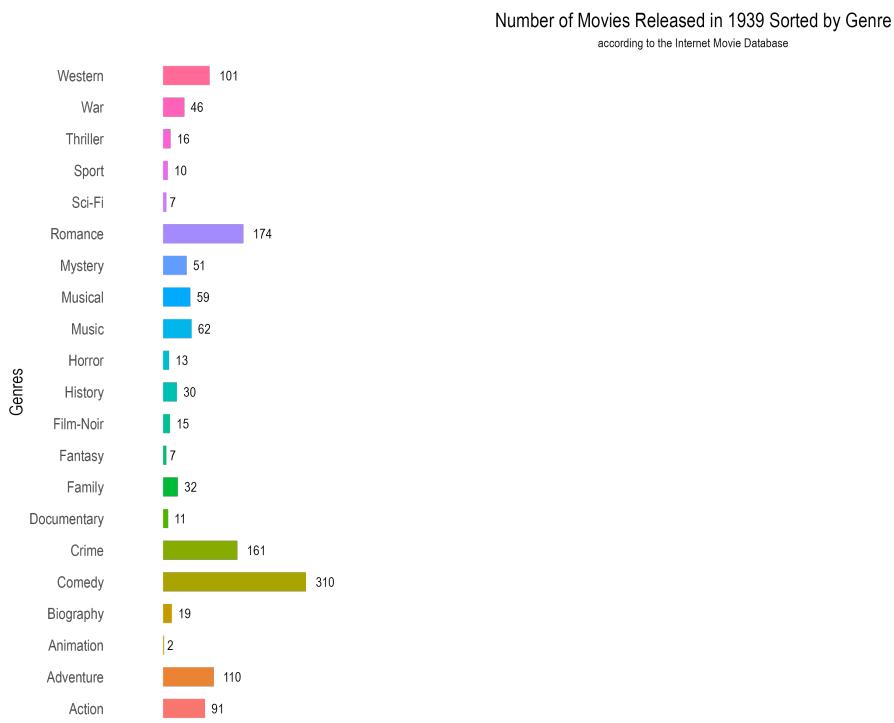
Given the breadth of IMDB's data, it's pretty cool to see that they offer [regularly updated files](#) containing tons of information on various films and the people involved with them for nerds like us to obsess over. We've selected some notable years in cinema history, made some graphs, had our morning coffee, and now it's time to see if there's any trends we can spot or lessons to be learned from looking at movies...*By The Numbers*

1939

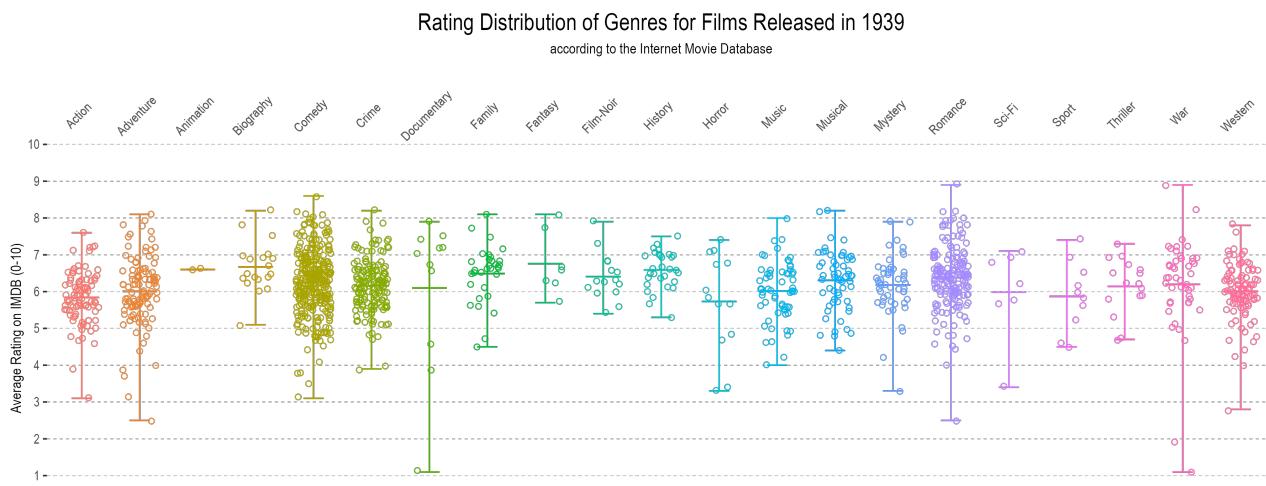
Notable releases include:

- [The Wizard of Oz](#)
- [Gone with the Wind](#)
- [Mr. Smith Goes to Washington](#)
- [Wuthering Heights](#)
- [Stagecoach](#)

1939—also known as the “Golden Year” of Hollywood—encompasses a lot of classic films and genre trends of the time despite having the fewest overall releases of the years we've chosen to look at:



We start off our travels through tables with Comedy in first place, followed by Romance in second place and Crime in third. At the bottom of the list, Animation holds the rear with only 2 films ([Gulliver's Travels](#) & [The Golden Key](#)), while Sci-Fi and Fantasy tie for second-to-last.



In terms of user rating on IMDB, the Romance and War genres are neck and neck for the highest rated movies of 1939. War seems to have the largest range of ratings (though likely due to some outliers near the bottom), and Animation unsurprisingly has the smallest range of ratings given there were only 2 films to release in that category anyway.

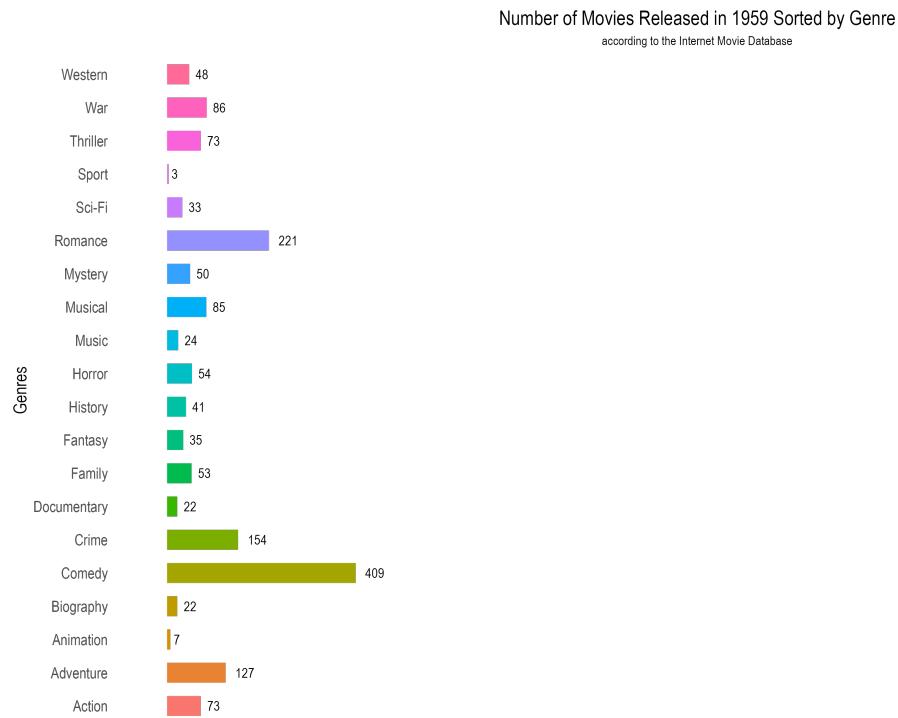
1959

Notable releases include:

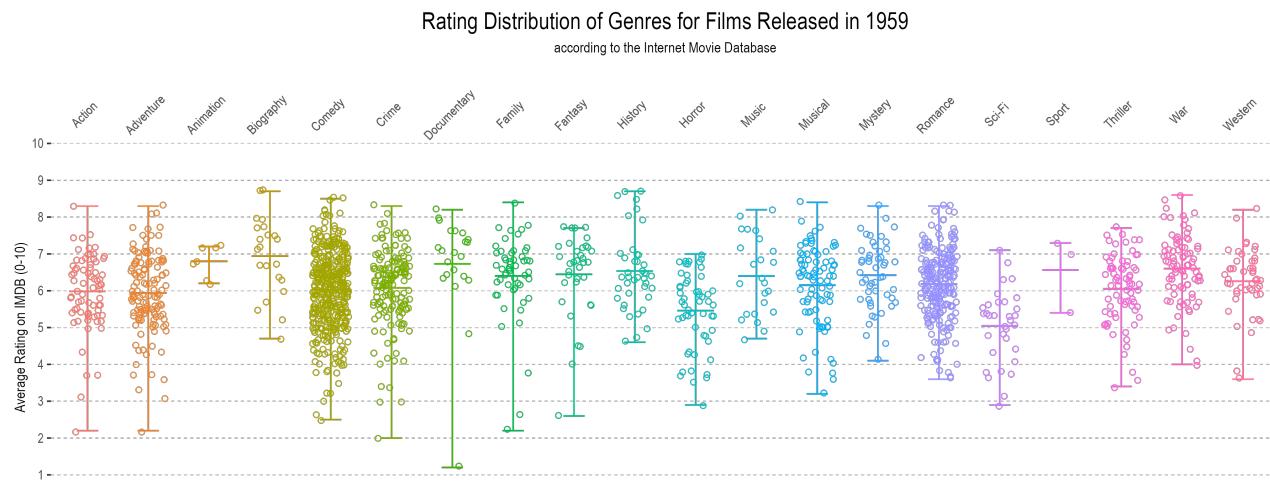
- [Some Like It Hot](#)

- [Ben-Hur](#)
- [Sleeping Beauty](#)
- [Shadows](#)
- [The 400 Blows](#)

Where 1939 may have been Hollywood's "Golden Year", 1959 was the year that big budget cinema came into focus.



Looking at the number of films per genre for 1959, we see that Animation has escaped the bottom spot for the second-to-last in exchange for Sport. As far as the top 3 genres, however, they seem to be the same as 1939 (Comedy in first, Romance in second, and Crime in third). It seems Film-Noir has left the building somehow as well.



When it comes to ratings for 1959, the History and Biography categories are duking it out for highest rated

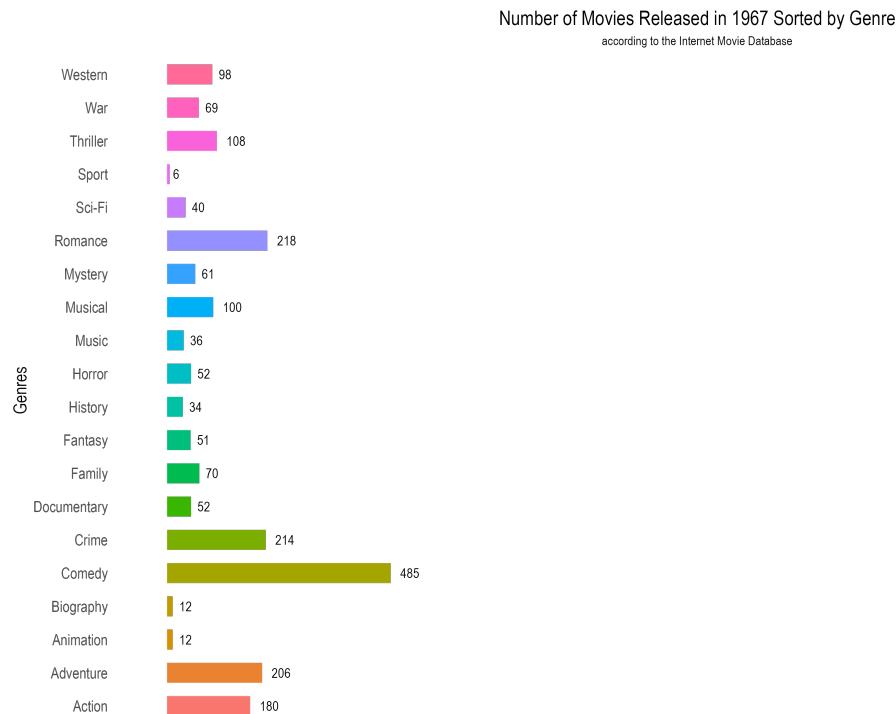
film, while Documentary contains the lowest rated film surveyed. Animation has a much larger range of ratings, but still takes the trophy on smallest range whereas Documentary has come around to the spot of largest range in this year.

1967

Notable releases include:

- [Bonnie and Clyde](#)
- [The Graduate](#)
- [A Fistful of Dollars](#)
- [In the Heat of the Night](#)
- [The Dirty Dozen](#)

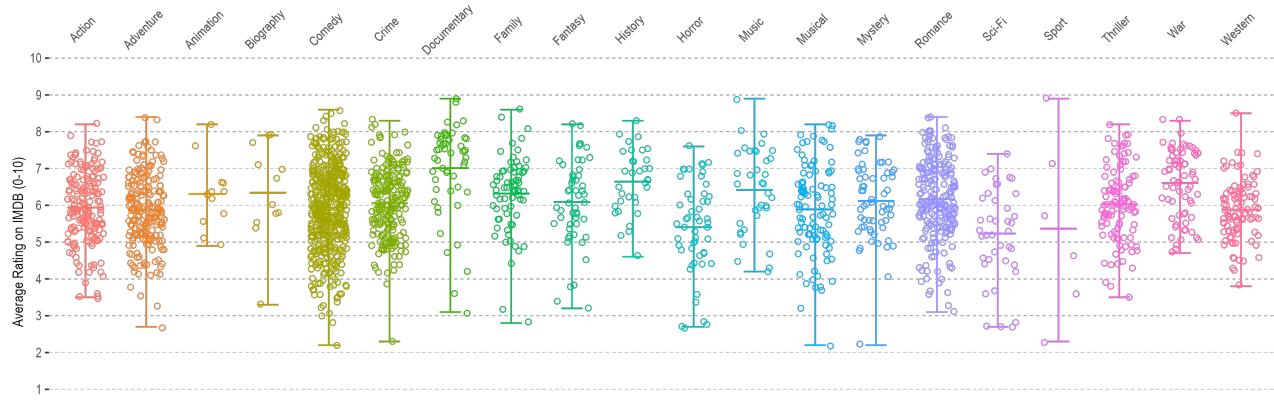
1967 saw the waning of classic Hollywood and the pressure of younger audiences wanting something edgier being vented into the steam of spicier releases.



Sport seems to remain at the bottom from last time, with Animation going up and Biography going down enough to create a tie for second-to-last. Our top 3 genres for 1967 are still the same as they were the last two years, but that's not to say Crime isn't trying it's best with the gap between it and Romance closing to only 4 films.

Rating Distribution of Genres for Films Released in 1967

according to the Internet Movie Database



1975

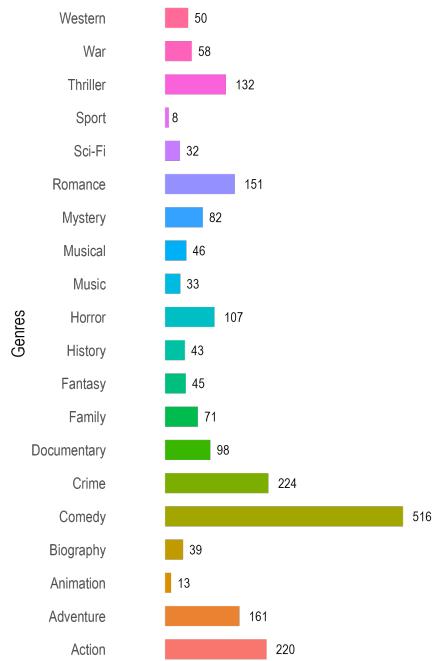
Notable releases include:

- [One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest](#)
- [Jaws](#)
- [Monty Python and the Holy Grail](#)
- [The Rocky Horror Picture Show](#)
- [Nashville](#)

1975 saw the introduction of the summer blockbuster with *Jaws*, whilst also seeing the release of one of the merely 3 films to ever win the 'Big Five' awards at the Oscars, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

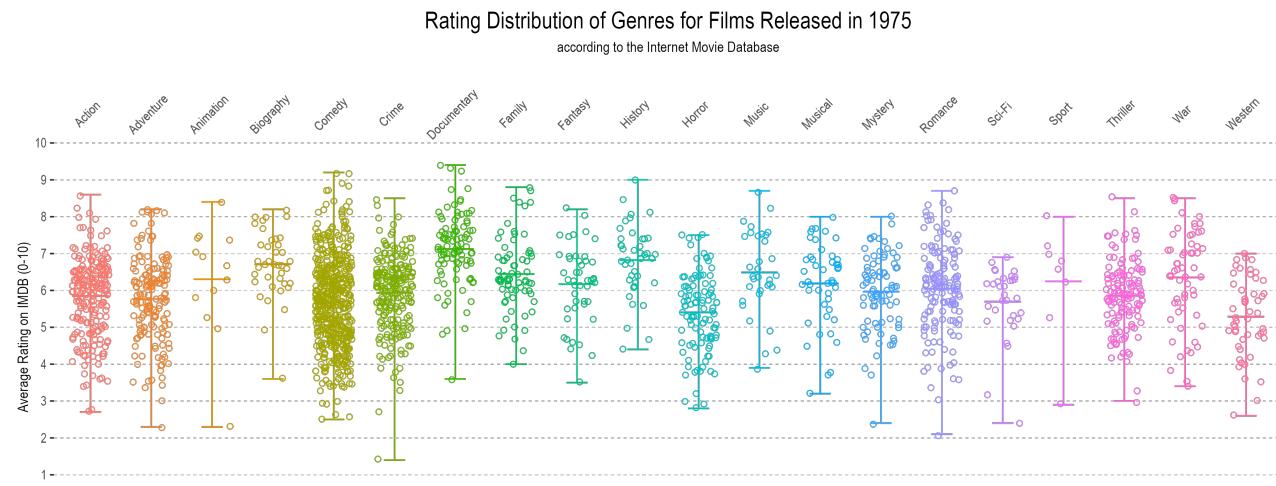
Number of Movies Released in 1975 Sorted by Genre

according to the Internet Movie Database



It would seem Sport is making a comfortable home for itself in last place now, while Animation is back to being

firmly in second-to-last now that Biography has gone back up. On the other side of things, Crime has finally overtaken Romance to find itself in second place, meanwhile Comedy remains in first place and Romance sullies on down to fourth place after Action blasts its way to third.



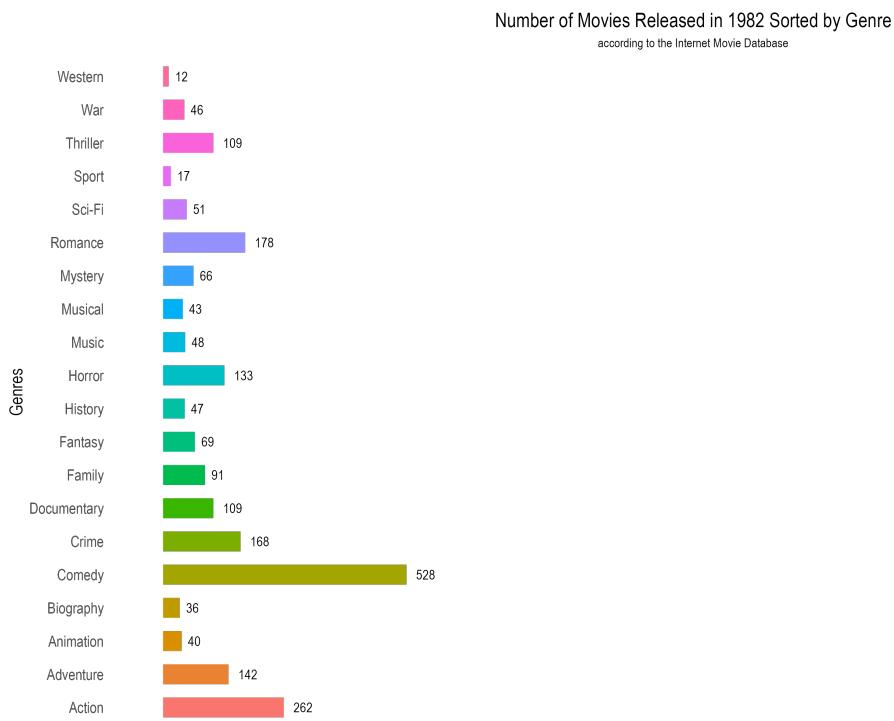
Sliding over to Rating again, we see Documentary holding the highest rated film out of this year's offerings, while Crime holds the lowest this time around. Crime also holds the largest range of ratings this time around despite harsh competition from Comedy, and while incredibly close between multiple categories, Western manages to take smallest range.

1982

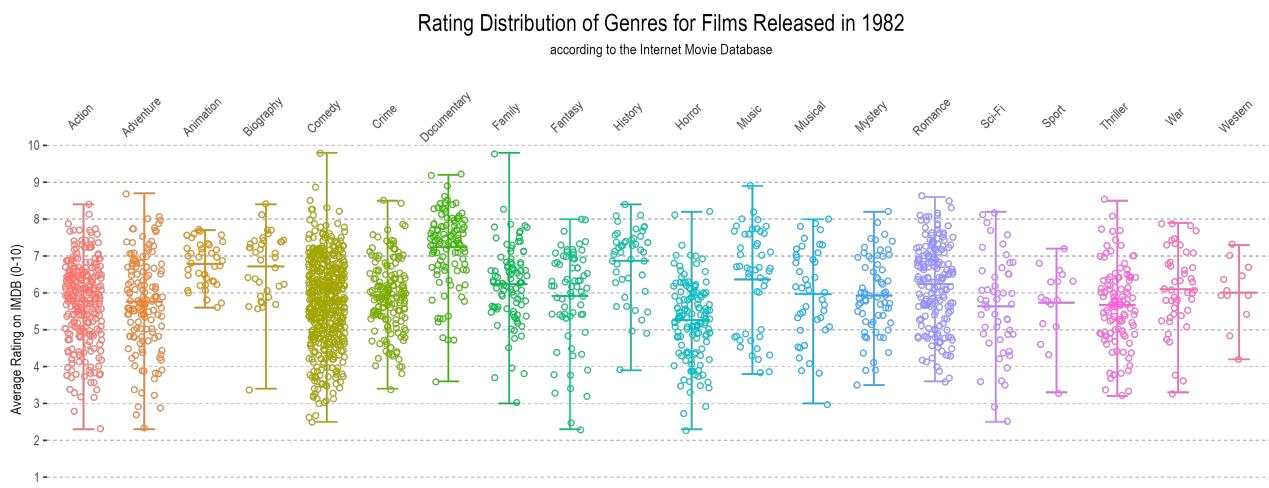
Notable releases include:

- [Blade Runner](#)
- [The Thing](#)
- [Tron](#)
- [E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial](#)
- [The Dark Crystal](#)

1982 was a hallmark year for Fantasy and Sci-Fi, with multiple genre-defining releases in both genres.



Sci-Fi and Fantasy both have moved quite a bit by this point compared to their starts in 1939, going from near the bottom to 11th and 9th places respectively. Speaking of shake-ups, Western has taken the rear spot away from Sport—now in second-to-last—despite much stronger showings in prior years. Comedy remains at the front of the pack, meanwhile Action has pushed up to second and pushed out Crime all the way to fourth, leaving room for Romance to re-enter the podium at third.



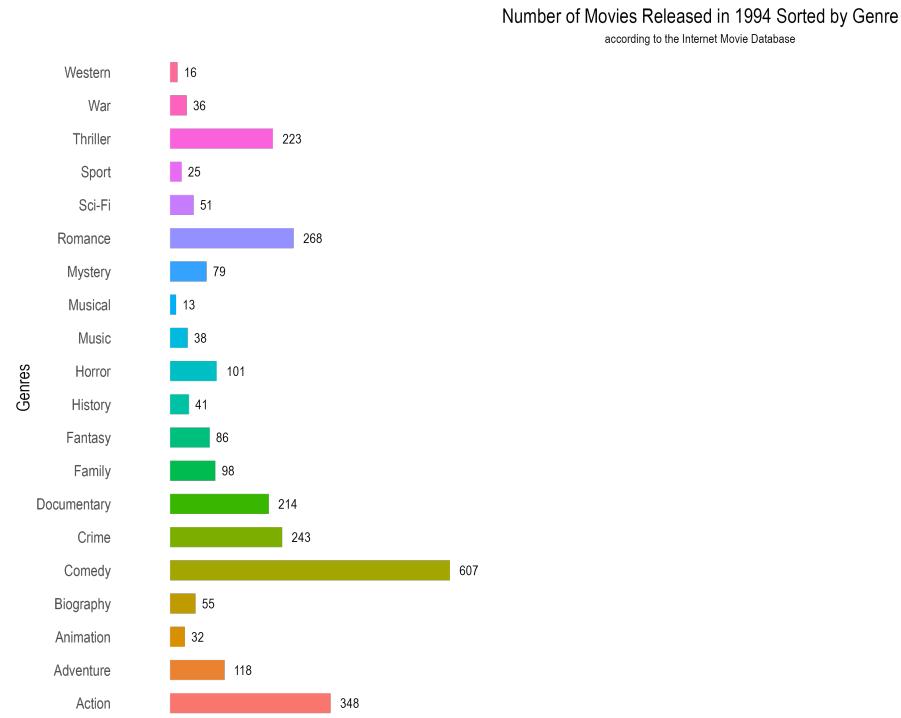
After a bit of time away, we're back to Animation having the smallest range of ratings. At the same time, Comedy comes in with the largest range *and* the highest rated film this round. It's close, but Horror appears to have the lowest score of the bunch this round.

1994

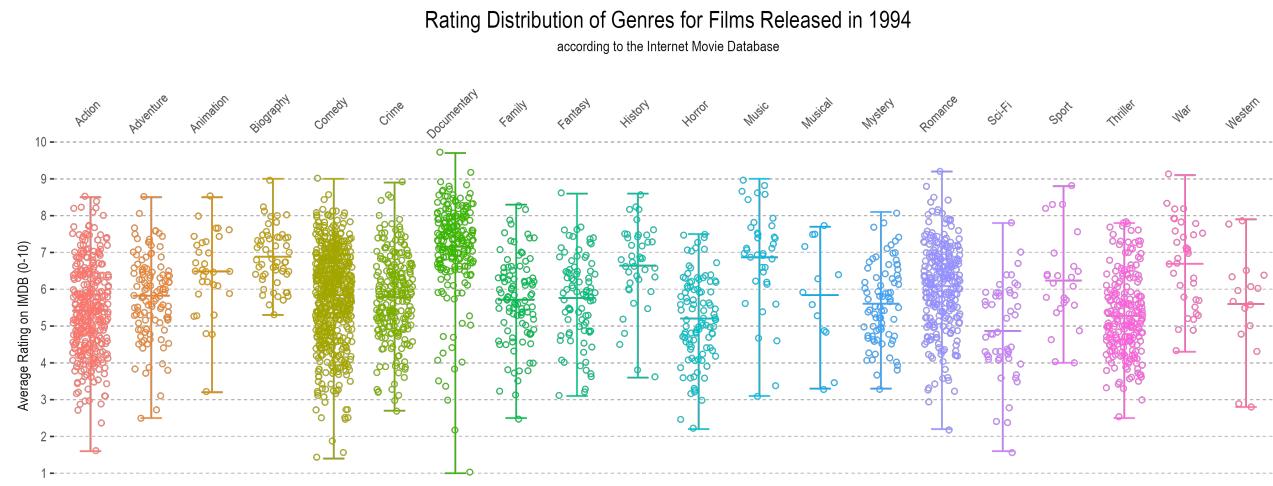
Notable releases include:

- [The Shawshank Redemption](#)
- [Pulp Fiction](#)
- [The Lion King](#)
- [Forrest Gump](#)
- [Leon: The Professional](#)

1994 is a great example of a year where films were firing on all cylinders regardless of genre, creating a rapid fire of classics in a short amount of time.



After a long period of floating around in the bottom third, Musical has at last taken the bottom spot away from Western, which lies only 3 spots up in second-to-last place. Comedy has rested on its laurels in first place this whole time, and continues to do so while Action cements its place at second and Romance its spot at third.



Here we see Documentary with the widest range ever up to this point, followed in by Biography on the opposite

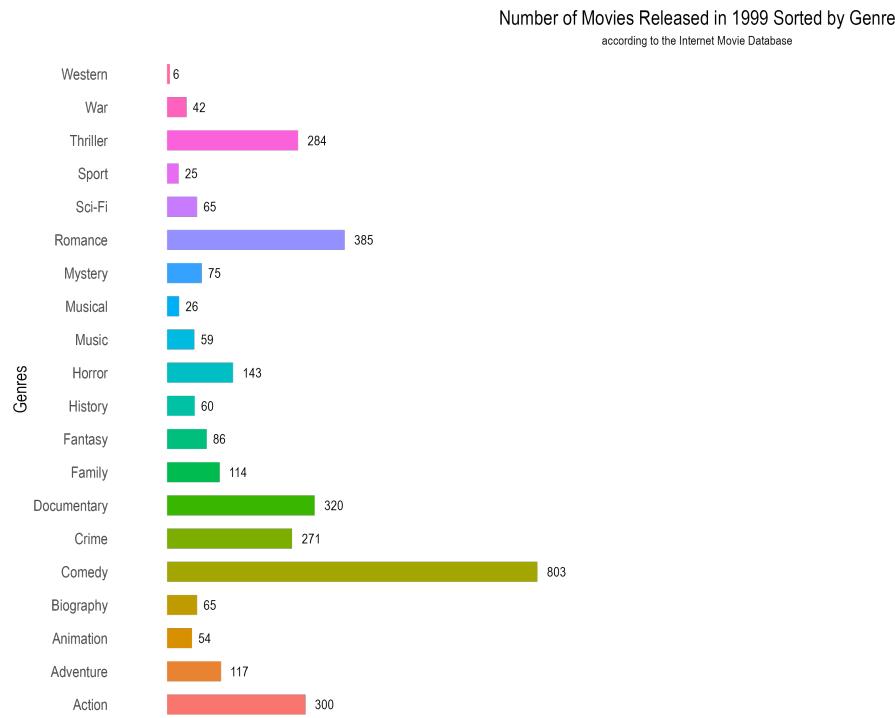
side with smallest range. Documentary also holds the highest *and* lowest scores for this year in the same category.

1999

Notable releases include:

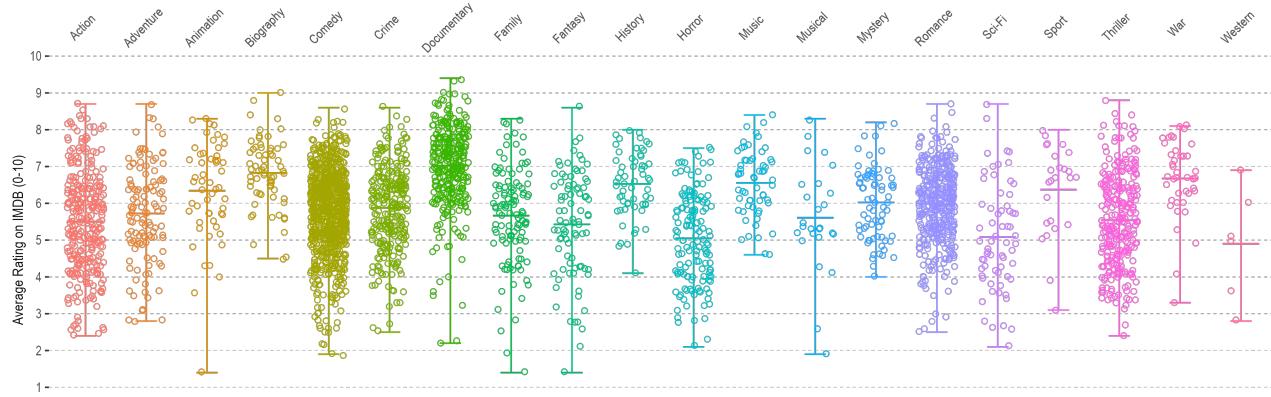
- [The Matrix](#)
- [Fight Club](#)
- [Star Wars: The Phantom Menace](#)
- [The Blair Witch Project](#)
- [Being John Malkovich](#)

What a more interesting year than 1999, with the turn of the millenium rapidly approaching and a number of influential films rushing out to audiences before the big Year 2000 hits.



Well, it seems Western is getting decimated once again, as it's back to the back of the line in releases for 1999 while Musicals has gotten back up but not by much in second-to-last place. Comedy seems like it's never going to leave first, but Action has certainly left second and is pushed to third after Romance manages to slide up to second place.

Rating Distribution of Genres for Films Released in 1999
according to the Internet Movie Database



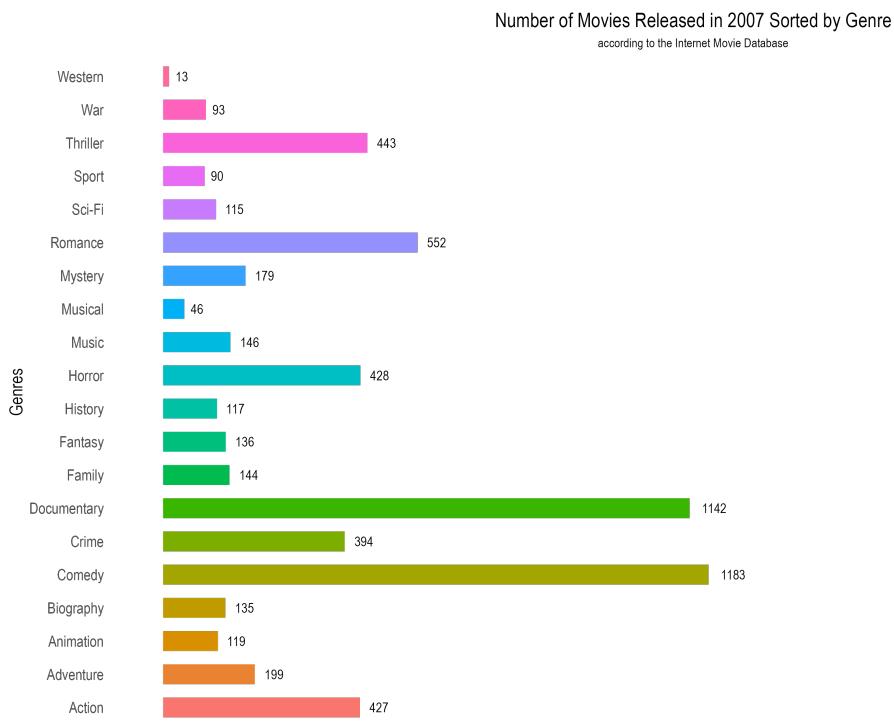
For once we have a tie in largest range between Fantasy and Documentary, though Animation is no slouch either and has definitely come a long way since the early days. Music holds the trophy for shortest range for this year in a very narrow battle with History coming down to a 0.1 point difference. As far as highest rating goes, that's still in the hands of Documentary, while Animation and Fantasy have taken joint custody of the lowest rating spot.

2007

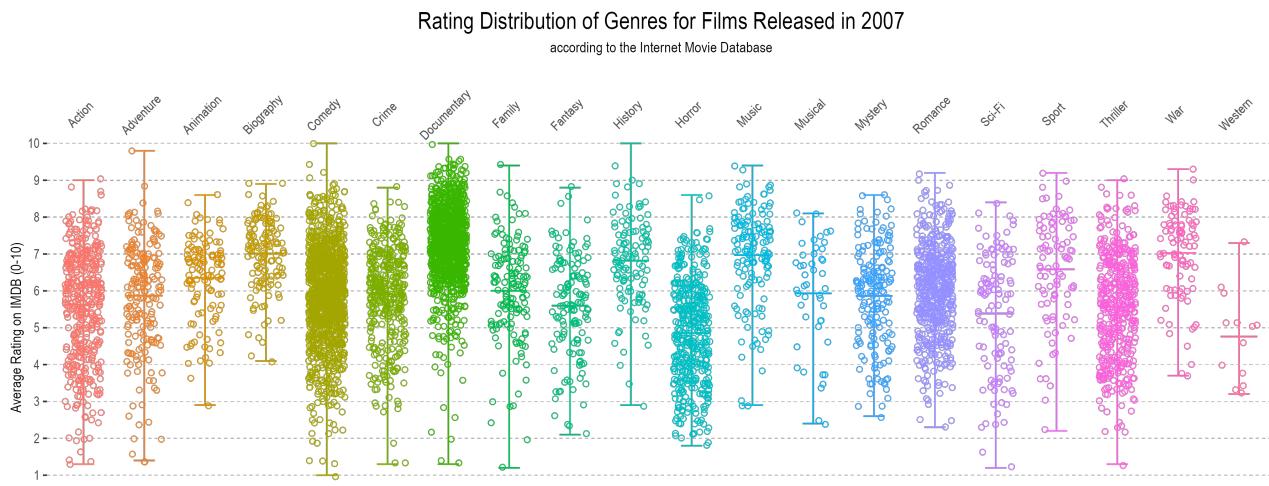
Notable releases include:

- [No Country for Old Men](#)
- [There Will Be Blood](#)
- [Hot Fuzz](#)
- [Ratatouille](#)
- [Superbad](#)

What a great year for media in general, honestly. So many great albums within music, literally the best year for video games probably ever, and of course...some absolute hits in movies.



It seems like Western being in last and Musical being in second-to-last is something we're getting quite used to at this point, but while the rear is unchanged the front of the pack is in absolute turmoil. Comedy hasn't been unseated from first yet, but Documentary has literally tripled in the last 8 years prior to this point and rushed at breakneck pace to second, pushing Romance to third and Action completely out of the running—which doesn't even take into account the 1 film lead Horror manages to sneak in above Action this year as well.

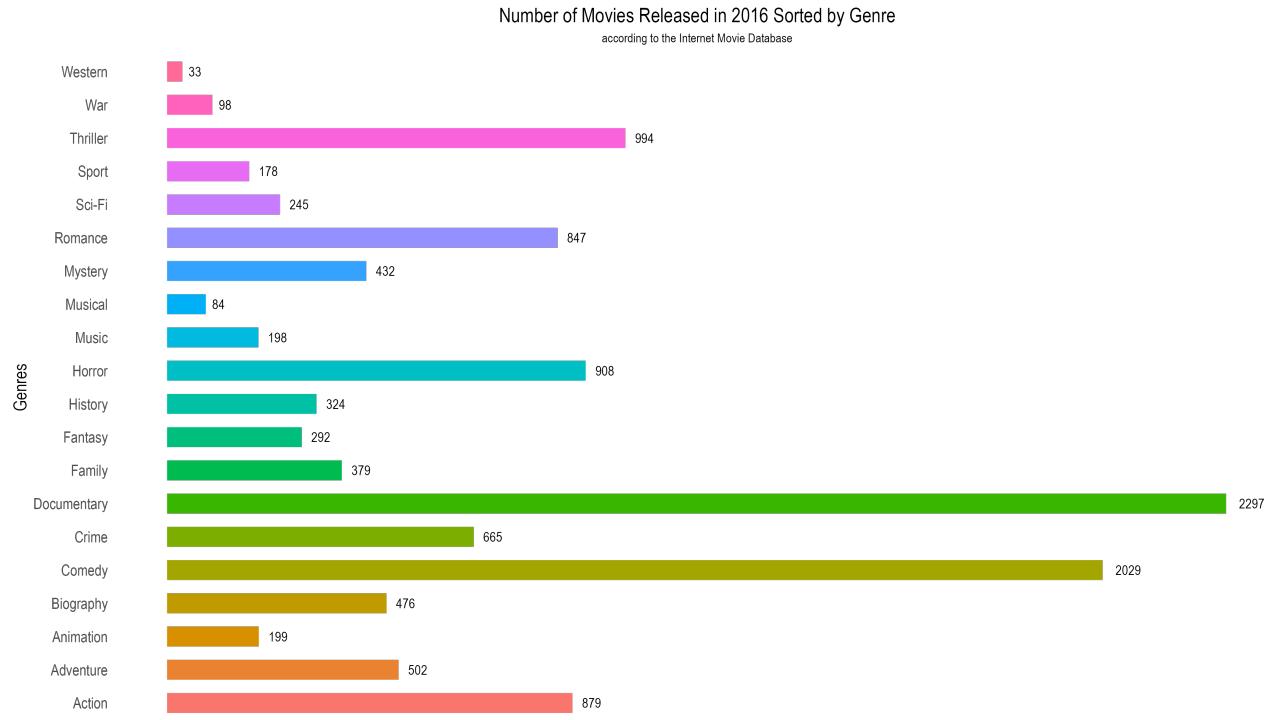


For the first time, we have a range spanning the whole graph that's been plotted with Comedy (which of course hands it largest range, highest rating, and lowest rating for this year), meanwhile Western grabs smallest range.

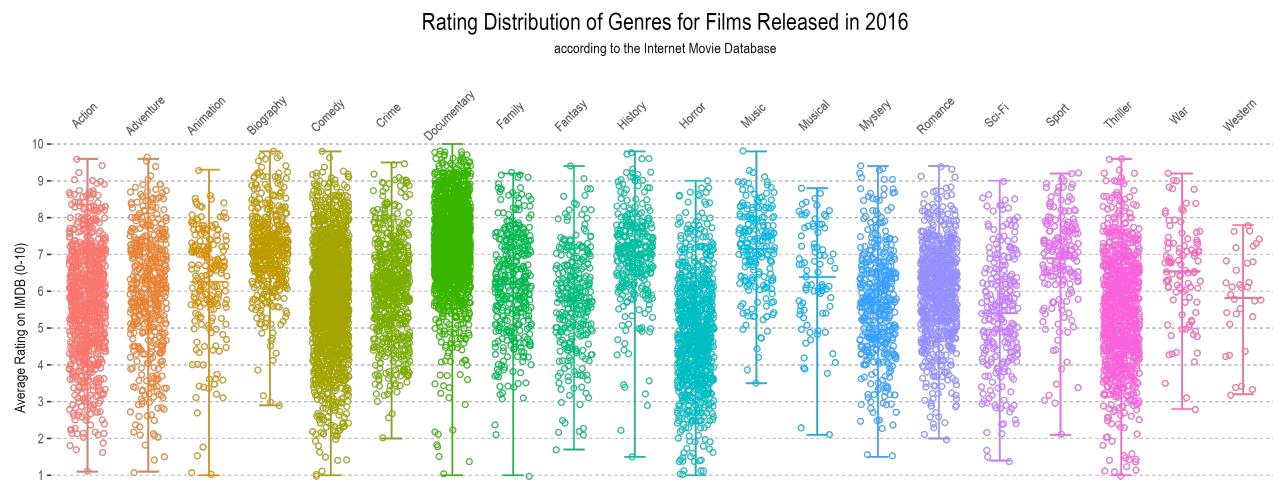
2016

Notable releases include:

- [Arrival](#)
- [La La Land](#)
- [Zootopia](#)
- [Moonlight](#)
- [Train to Busan](#)



It really does seem like Western being in last and Musical being second to last is basically a foregone conclusion at this point, huh? What isn't a foregone conclusion however is Comedy being at number one, as it's at last been unseated by the massive boom in Documentary we've seen around 2007. As if that's not enough upsets, Thriller has managed to shoot up into third place as well. It's been accelerating a bit over the last couple years we've examined, but it's just shy of doubled from 2007 to now.



We're still rolling with the graph-wide largest range, though in Documentary instead of Comedy this time (which may have something to do with the latter unseating the former as the reigning champion). Western

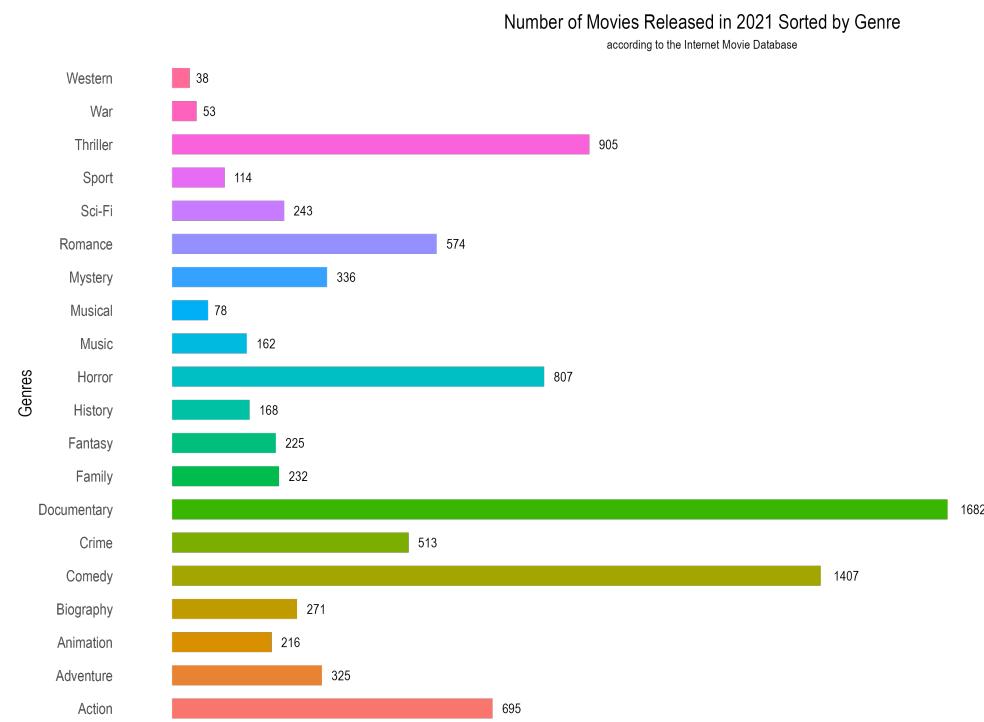
manages to keep smallest range as well, and Thriller continues suddenly being notable with the lowest rating on the graph this year. On the highest rating side of things, both Biography and Comedy are tied.

2021

Notable releases include:

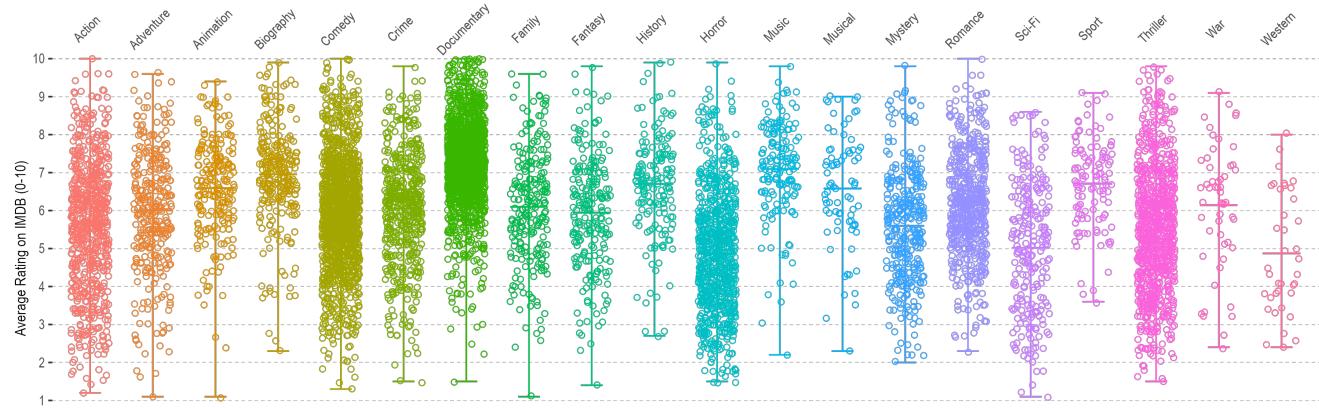
- [Dune](#)
- [Spider-Man: No Way Home](#)
- [Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings](#)
- [No Time to Die](#)
- [Encanto](#)

2021 may not necessarily be considered a “major year in cinema”, but it can’t hurt to see how last year’s films stacked up against the heavy-hitters we’ve looked at thus far.



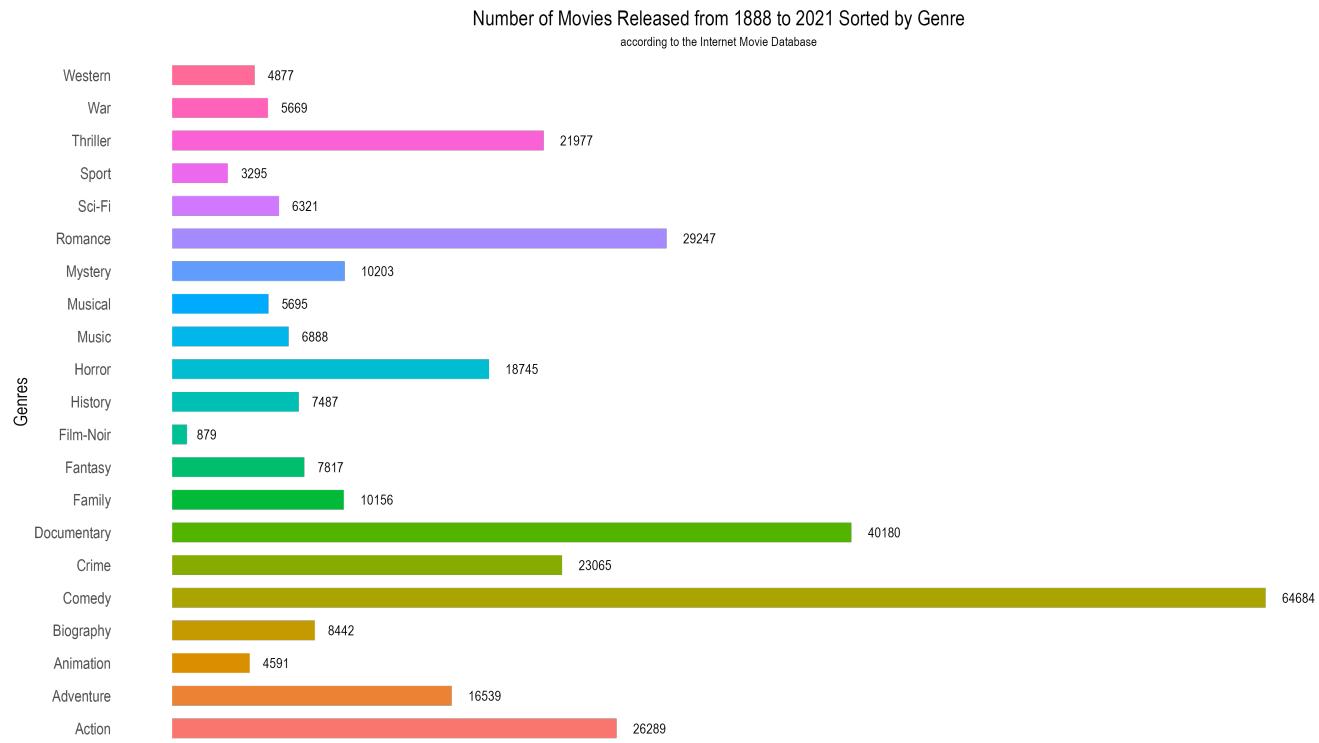
Other than History and Fantasy swapping places, it seems there’s no change whatsoever in the placement and trends of these categories aside from a general decrease across the board—likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic that messed up film production real hard the year prior.

Rating Distribution of Genres for Films Released in 2021
according to the Internet Movie Database



In our final round of examination, Action manages to come away with largest range, while Action, Documentary, Comedy, and Romance all come away tied for highest rating. Sport, meanwhile, manages smallest range just barely over Western, and Family takes the cake for lowest rating in 2021.

Finally—as we simply can't resist—here's every movie on IMDB sorted by Genre:



And that's a wrap! What did you think of our little journey through IMDB? What do you think the winners and losers will be next year? What about next decade? Let us know on [Twitter](#) or come discuss it with us in our new Midpoint [Discord](#)!

(Want more? Check out more *By The Numbers* [here](#))

